

Governor Spitzer, Rep. Nadler Encourage Child Health Plus Enrollment to Insure New York's Children

Wednesday, 08 August 2007

NEW YORK -- Governor Eliot Spitzer today toured a New York City community health care facility serving low-income families with Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Congressman Jerrold Nadler and Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn to emphasize the steps his administration is taking to provide health insurance to the nearly 400,000 uninsured children across the state and to encourage enrollment in Child Health Plus as a part of this effort. The Governor announced appointments to the newly-established Children's Cabinet Advisory Board, which will provide outside perspectives and expertise to the Children's Cabinet. The Children's Cabinet is currently focused on enrolling the state's 400,000 uninsured children in Child Health Plus, as well as improving access to high quality pre-kindergarten and early learning programs.

Earlier this year, the Governor proposed and the legislature adopted a plan to expand eligibility for Child Health Plus from 250 percent of the poverty level to 400 percent. Child Health Plus is a full-service insurance program covering physical exams, preventative and emergency care, diagnosis and treatment of illness and injuries, as well as prescription and non-prescription medicines.

"Every child should be able to go to the doctor regularly and count on quality care that is critical to their development and well being," said Governor Spitzer. "The state budget has helped move us forward in our effort to expand coverage to the 400,000 children who lack health insurance. Now the challenge is getting all of those children into the system. I have asked my Children's Cabinet and Advisory Board to make this and pre-kindergarten their two top priorities and I have great confidence in the expertise and drive they bring to these important matters."

Mayor Michael Bloomberg said: "Half of all the uninsured children in the state live in the five boroughs of New York City, and providing these youngsters with affordable health insurance is a goal that I wholeheartedly share with the Governor. We're very proud of the success we've had in enrolling eligible New Yorkers in Child Health Plus and other public health insurance programs, but we're committed to doing more through HRA and by partnering with the State."

Touring the Ryan Chelsea-Clinton Community Health Center in New York City, the Governor and Mayor met with facilitated enrollers who help parents enroll their children in Child Health Plus or Medicaid.

The Governor used the visit to draw attention to the efforts of facilitated enrollers and to let the public know how they can sign-up their children. The public can enroll through 47 community-based health organizations located in every county throughout the state; through certain health insurance companies; and through their local county social services office.

The Department of Health has established an enrollment hotline (1-800-698-4543) and website (www.nyhealth.gov/nysdoh/chplus/where_do_i_apply.htm) to provide applications and answer questions to make it easy for parents to find enrollers in their area. The Governor also announced that starting today, the state's home page (www.ny.gov) will have an easy link to this information as well.

To make it easier for children and adults to keep their health insurance coverage, beginning in January, Medicaid enrollees will no longer have to provide verification of their income to renew their coverage; the state will conduct the income verification process. In addition, beginning April 1, 2008, eligible adults will receive 12 months of continuous coverage in Medicaid or Family Health Plus, thereby enabling an entire family to sign up and remain insured for a full year.

Congressman Jerrold Nadler said: "Programs like SCHIP and Child Health Plus keep our children healthy and strong, and I am proud to support these efforts. However, for too many children, the quality of health care they receive -- if they receive any at all -- is nowhere near the high standard set by the Ryan Center. I commend the Governor and his administration for taking steps to provide healthcare coverage to 400,000 children in New York. I was proud to vote for the CHAMP Act in Congress, which reauthorizes and expands SCHIP. I strongly urge President Bush to reconsider his veto threat of this necessary legislation."

Speaker Christine C. Quinn said: "Any number of people living in New York without health insurance is unacceptable. But thanks to the steps we take today, we can now be sure that more children will have access to quality preventative and emergency care. I want to thank Governor Spitzer for making children's health a priority and for his long term approach to making a lack of access to proper health care a thing of the past."

Health Commissioner Richard F. Daines, M.D. said: "Governor Spitzer believes in putting the patient first. The Health Department is aggressively seeking out eligible children to enroll them in health insurance programs and provide them with high-quality patient-centered care."

Children's Cabinet Advisory Board

In April, the Governor announced his Children's Agenda and the creation of a Children's Cabinet. The Cabinet's mission is to improve the lives of New York's children by ensuring the successful implementation of the expansion of the Child Health Plus program and identifying ways to offer increased access to high quality pre-kindergarten and early learning programs. The Cabinet will be assisted by an advisory board named by the Governor today that includes 33 distinguished individuals from diverse fields including health care, education, government, and early learning.

"These appointments to the Children's Cabinet bring us one step closer to implementing a comprehensive children's agenda that creates an environment where every child has an opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed," said Governor Spitzer. "The two Co-Chairs and the members of the Advisory Board bring extraordinary expertise in child development, leadership experience in communities around the state, and knowledge of practical, tested solutions. Their hard work will reinforce our efforts to provide children with the foundation they need for healthy and successful lives, through universal health coverage, expanded pre-kindergarten availability, fighting childhood obesity, and other important initiatives."

The Children's Cabinet Advisory Board will be co-chaired by Geoffrey Canada, President and CEO of Harlem Children's Zone, and Karen Schimke, President and CEO of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, both of whom have spent decades working to enhance the quality of life for children and families.

Canada said, "I look forward to serving as co-chair because of my deeply held belief that making real improvements in the lives of New York's children will require intense focus from New York State's leaders. The Advisory Board brings together a distinguished group of these leaders from across the state to provide a fresh and independent look at children's lives."

Schimke said, "With the creation of the Children's Cabinet and the Advisory Board, we are at a real moment of opportunity for New York State's children. By bringing together top talent both inside and outside state government, we will be able to meet the Governor's challenge to truly improve children's circumstances in measurable ways."

The Governor's Appointees to the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board are:

- Kenneth Adams, President and CEO, NYS Business Council
- Steven D. Blatt, MD, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, SUNY Upstate Medical University
- Eric Brettschneider, JD, Executive Director, Agenda for Children Tomorrow
- William C. Cala, EdD, Interim Superintendent, Rochester City School District
- Janice L. Charles, Executive Director, The Children's Clinic
- Robert C. Compani, Director of Strategic Campaigns, CSEA Local 1000
- Matilda Cuomo, First Lady of New York State (1983-1995). Founder and Chairperson, Mentoring USA
- Julie A. Gates, Parent Representative
- Linda I. Gibbs, JD, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, NYC Office of the Mayor
- Susan K. Hager, President and CEO, United Way of New York State
- Wayne H. Ho, MPP, Executive Director, Council for Asian-American Children and Families
- Lourdes T. Iglesias, Executive Director, Hispanos Unidos de Buffalo, Inc.
- Mark Jasinski, President, NYS Pre-kindergarten Directors' Association
- The Reverend Emma Jordan-Simpson, Executive Director, Children's Defense Fund
- Honorable Judith S. Kaye, Chief Judge, NYS Court of Appeals
- Jane Knitzer, EdD, Director, National Center for Children in Poverty
- Nancy S. Kolben, Executive Director, Child Care, Inc.
- Richard E. Kreipe, MD, Chief, Adolescent Medicine, University of Rochester Medical Center
- Dina J. Lieser, MD, FAAP, Interim Executive Director, Docs for Tots
- Anne W. Mitchell, President, Early Childhood Policy Research
- Elba Montalvo, Executive Director, The Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc.
- Gail B. Nayowith, Executive Director, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
- Maria Neira, Vice President, NYSUT
- Gwen K. O'Shea, Chief Operations Officer, Health and Welfare Council of Long Island
- Moisés Pérez, Founder and Executive Director, Alianza Dominicana
- Marie A. Porter-Cannon, Executive Director, Holy Cross Head Start
- Carol J. Saginaw, Executive Director, New York State Child Care Coordinating Council
- Nancy Wackstein, Executive Director, United Neighborhood Houses of New York

- Michael Weiner, MBA, Commissioner, Erie County DSS
- Peggy J. Wozniak, EdD, Superintendent, Binghamton City School District
- Patsy Yang-Lewis, DrPH, Acting Health Commissioner , Westchester County Department of Health

In addition to the formation of the Children's Cabinet, the Governor introduced legislation removing junk food from our schools and keeping violent video games out of the hands of young children.

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